

Irreplaceable by **TheMikeWheelers (jasongracefully)**

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Relationships: Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-01-02

Updated: 2017-01-02

Packaged: 2022-04-02 00:20:56

Rating: General Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,141

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

Mike figured someone new could help him get over El, but did he really want to get over her?

Irreplaceable

It all started when they found the Snow Ball tickets. The boys knew Mike was missing Eleven, but then seeing he'd bought two tickets, that's when they knew they had to do something.

Wallowing in his pity wasn't going to help, and El wasn't coming back. So Dustin, Lucas, and Will got the idea that maybe a new girl would help Mike get over her.

Stephanie was new to Hawkins. She was sweet and liked science and Dustin knew her from his English class. That was the only class he didn't have with any of the other boys, and she was the only person who wanted to partner with him.

So the boys slipped a note into her locker, asking her to the ball as Mike.

Of course he didn't know about this, and they expected anger when they told him. He yelled, and when they weren't looking he wiped the desperate tears, not wanting to even think about going with anyone other than El.

Maybe they had a point though, Mike had to admit that. It had been weeks, if El wasn't back yet, maybe she was never coming home. He hated the thought, but maybe it was time he started to get over her. Stephanie could be the distraction he needed.

So he went to the Snow Ball with her. Mike couldn't lie, she was nice

and pretty. There was just one problem, she wasn't El.

Mike didn't like Stephanie, but he couldn't be with the girl he liked, so he tried to force himself to like her.

Stephanie was fun, Mike liked being with her, but things never felt quite right. Something was always missing, but that wasn't the problem. Someone was missing and that was the person who Mike really loved.

Then she came back.

El's return rocked his world, it all felt like a dream. For weeks he could still feel his mind shake at every reminder that she was there. She was alive and she was in Hawkins.

El didn't understand who Stephanie was, all she knew was that this girl was the newest addition to her friends. She was also very close with Mike, but she didn't know why that thought always set a bad feeling in her stomach.

She watched Mike hold hands with Stephanie, even touch his lips to hers a few times. El just remembered when he did that to her, and wished he would do it again, but she could tell it was something reserved for this new girl.

After El came back, Mike felt like a liar every time he saw Stephanie. He knew he lied about his feelings for so long, the guilt that came

with every “I love you” was enough, knowing that there was someone else he wanted to say those words to.

He stayed with her for so long because he figured the boys were right, this was how he needed to move on. Maybe that fact was still right. El didn't understand her feelings, she probably didn't even like him back, Mike figured, it's unfair of him to even imagine anything.

Mike tried to accept the fact that he would never be with El, but he could be with Stephanie. She was an amazing girl, Mike wanted nothing more than to love her as much as he claimed he did.

He couldn't talk to anyone about it. The boys had no idea, they believed he really loved Stephanie. Every time they would tease him, he just laughed along. Mike didn't want to tell them he didn't actually like her, because God, he wanted to.

But every time he looked at El, it was as if no one else in the world existed. Her laugh filled his mind and drowned out any other thoughts. Mike couldn't lie to himself anymore, he was still in love with her.

He still remembered the conversation with El when he explained what his relationship with Stephanie was. That was a dreaded moment, telling the girl you love what dating is and how you're dating someone else.

When El heard his explanation her eyes turned to fire. Some of the things he said reminded her of how he asked her to the Snow Ball. Was she remembering that wrong? Did she just want to remember it

that way?

El felt her stomach turn at that realization. She wanted Mike to feel that way about her, but instead he did towards Stephanie.

Meanwhile Mike continued his internal struggle, debating what to do with Stephanie. Every day he could feel his guilt rising for how he lied to her. He didn't know what he wanted, the only thing that seemed to clear his mind was El. With her, everything seemed to make sense. There wasn't any confusion or lying, Mike felt nothing but pure happiness.

One night he was up late, lying in his bed trying desperately to decide what to do. Looking beside his bed he saw his supercom, and Mike knew all he wanted then was to call El. Just to hear her talk or laugh or just breathe, he wanted her.

He would always want her, as much as he tried to stop that or distract himself, you can't just will love away.

He couldn't keep lying to Stephanie, it wasn't fair to her. He would rather be alone than with some imitation of the girl he really wanted to be with. After all, El was irreplaceable.

He broke up with Stephanie the next morning, it was messy and emotional, as all break ups are.

El found out from Will. Mike had called her adoptive brother right

after it happened, and he had mentioned it casually over breakfast.

“Oh, guess what,” he exclaimed with a mouth full of scrambled eggs.

“What?” Joyce had her familiar encouraging smile.

“Mike and Stephanie broke up.”

“Really?” Jonathan spun around while put bread in the toaster, “What happened?”

Joyce was shocked, “I thought they really liked each other, I wonder what happened.”

El was silent throughout this whole conversation. Her mouth hung open, mind spiraling. Why would they have broken up? She felt a smile crawl its way onto her face, and she did her best to suppress. Mike was her best friend, she shouldn't be upset he was going through this.

She tried to push down any selfish wants or fantasies, Mike was probably devastated. El made the decision to go visit him after breakfast.

That's how El found herself sitting next to a moping Mike on the couch in the Wheeler basement.

Mike couldn't help himself, he didn't like Stephanie, but breakups are always painful. His head was leaning onto El's shoulder, and he was suddenly grateful to have her. Even if things would never be the way he wanted, he was still lucky to have a friend like her.

After a bit of silence, El spoke up.

“What happened with you two,” She hoped her desperation for the answer wasn't showing.

Mike was quiet, before giving a deep breath and mumbling, “I didn't ever really love her. I was just lying to myself,” He gave out a depressed chuckle, “I thought maybe she could replace the person I actually love.”

El felt her heart close up. He didn't love Stephanie, but he loved someone else. Of course he did, she wanted to scream at herself for believing for even a second that he could like her.

She felt a few tears build up in her eyes, but she blinked them back. El wanted to be a supportive friend, not get her drama involved.

But Mike could always read her like a book, he knew what she was feeling even when she tried to hide it.

“What's wrong, El?”

She brought her sleeve up to her face to wipe her eyes and shook her head, refusing to let him comfort her over this, "It's nothing. Uh, so who is it that you actually love."

"It doesn't matter," Mike looked down, "I can't ever be with her anyway. She doesn't like me back"

"That's not true. Anyone would be lucky to be with you. Every girl should like you."

It slipped out of her mouth before her mind could stop her.

"Do you really think that?" Mike was looking up at her, and she paused. This could be the point of no return. This is where she could be going over the edge.

But El didn't care. If she couldn't be with Mike, she didn't care if he knew how she felt. What she cared about was that Mike knew the truth, he was amazing and he shouldn't ever think someone wouldn't like him back.

Friends don't lie, after all.

"Yes."

He looked at her for a second before thinking of a response, "You're amazing, El. I don't know why you're upset, but you don't deserve that."

Then the gates opened. Hearing that, all the walls came crashing down. The tears she had tried so hard to push back were falling out. Mike didn't know what to say, he pulled her into a hug as she sobbed onto him.

She pulled away, suddenly embarrassed. She started wiping away all the wetness of her cheeks, wanting to hide her face.

Mike kept his arm around her, "El, what's going on?"

"I know how you feel," She wanted to run away, but she wasn't going to avoid how she felt any longer, "The boy I love doesn't love me back.

"There's no way that's true!" Mike felt his heart collapse. She loved someone else, his chest was pounding. Seeing her cry didn't help him either, he wanted nothing more than to slap any boy who couldn't see how perfect she was.

El looked at him, "I know it is, he doesn't love me. He just pities me."

Mike felt his heart stop completely at that. Who would pity her, outside of the small group of people who knew her past? If she thinks this boy is pitying her, Mike gulped at the realization that this meant

she must be in love with one of the boys, one of his best friends.

“No one would ever pity you. You're the strongest, coolest girl out there. Every boy should admire you, because none of them would ever be good enough for you.”

She wiped away the few years left, “Really?”

Mike took a deep breath, giving himself a pep talk in his brain.

Okay Wheeler, this is your chance. Even if she doesn't like you, this is the girl you love. If the truth will make her feel better, get yourself together and tell her.

“Of course,” Mike took in a deep breath, shaking off his nerves, “And I know this because even if you don't feel the same way, I'm in love with you, El. I know you're amazing and any guy would be lucky for you let them love your perfection.”

Mike felt the familiar blush heat up his face as he looked at her face, desperate for her reaction.

“You really love me?”

Mike's blush deepened upon seeing the look on El's face. He shuddered, realizing he really just admitted his feelings.

"I've loved you since the second I first saw you in the woods, and I've loved you every second since then," He looked down, shame coming back for his next sentence, "You've saved me and the guys so many times, I don't know which of them you love, but any of them would be lucky to love you back."

"Mike."

He looked down at her wide-eyed expression, "Yeah?"

"You think I love one of them?"

Mike couldn't look at her as he nodded his head solemnly.

"They're my friends," He looked back at her, "And I love them, and I don't really understand why I feel different, but I don't love them like that."

He started breathing heavily. If she loved one of them, at least he knew it was a good guy, no matter how much it devastated him.

"Mike, I'm in love with you."

His mind was short-circuiting. He couldn't process anything or think of anything to say, all he knew was El just told him she loved him.

“I’m in love with you too.”

Mike looked down at her, and for a second their gaze held a beat. Before he could realize what was happened they were both leaning forward.

When their lips touched, they each felt explosions go off. They had kissed once before, but they didn't really understand what was happening. They didn't know how the other felt.

This time was different. This kiss was reassurance. It wasn't an impulse, it wasn't rushed or confused, instead it was a reminder of everything they'd just told one another.

And for a few seconds, despite all the tears and denial they'd spent so long battling, everything was right.